

Message Text

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ACTION OES-09

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DOE FOR BORRE AND VANDERRYN

DEPT FOR BORIGHT AND MARTIN, OES

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: TECH, ENRG, MNUC, IT, US

SUBJ: US-ITALY BILATERAL ENERGY COOPERATION: RADIOACTIVE WASTE
DISPOSAL

REF: A) ROME 11451, B) ROME 7777

1. SUMMARY: THE GOI REQUESTS THAT THE USG PROVIDE EXPERT ASSISTANCE IN THE EARLY DESIGN STAGES OF AN ITALIAN PILOT PLANT FOR VITRIFICATION OF HIGH-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTES. THE MISSION SUGGESTS A FORTHCOMING ATTITUDE AND AN EARLY RESPONSE BY THE USG. END SUMMARY.

2. THERE FOLLOW THE TEXT OF A NOTE VERBALE RECEIVED FROM THE MFA:

QTE. THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS THE HONOR TO REFER TO THE TALKS HELD IN WASHINGTON ON MARCH 20-23, 1978 BETWEEN ITALIAN EXPERTS FROM CNEN AND AGIP NUCLEARE AND U.S. EXPERTS OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE RICHLAND LABORATORIES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY WITH A VIEW TO STUDYING THE POSSIBILITY OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IN THE SECTOR OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE.

THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WISHES TO THANK THE U.S. DELEGATION PARTICIPATING IN THE ABOVE MEETINGS FOR SUGGESTIONS EXPRESSED ON THAT OCCASION AND ESPECIALLY THE MATTER OF THE VITRIFICATION PROCESS OF HIGH ACTIVITY RADIOACTIVE WASTE.

IN THIS REGARD, AS ALREADY MENTIONED IN THE WASHINGTON MEETINGS, CNEN AND AGIP NUCLEARE WOULD LIKE TO PROCEED WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SMALL PILOT PLANT FOR THE VITRIFICATION OF HIGH ACTIVITY WASTE PRODUCED OR BEING PRODUCED IN THE CNEN'S EUREX AND ITREC RETREATMENT PILOT PLANTS. THE PROCESS THAT IS TO BE EMPLOYED IS BASED ON INNER QTE POT VITRIFICATION INNER UNQTE; IT HAS BEEN ALREADY AND COLD TESTED ON BENCH SCALE.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED VITRIFICATION STATION IS CONSISTENT WITH SAFETY REQUIREMENTS, IN AS MUCH AS THE HIGH ACTIVITY WASTE ALREADY PRODUCED OR BEING PRODUCED CANNOT BE KEPT IN LIQUID STATE FOR A PERIOD OVER FIVE YEARS. THE QUANTITY OF HIGH ACTIVITY LIQUID WASTE IS AT THE MOMENT LIMITED, BUT IN FUTURE A MAXIMUM PRODUCTION OF 10 CUBIC METERS PER YEAR IS EXPECTED.

THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS THE HONOR TO APPLY TO THE KINDNESS OF THIS EMBASSY OF THE U.S. OF AMERICA SO THAT THE COMPETENT AMERICAN AUTHORITIES MAY TAKE INTO REVIEW THE POSSIBILITY OF FURNISHING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN THE PLANNING OF SUCH VITRIFICATION STATION AT THE STAGE OF THE BASIC DESIGN OF PLANT. THE ITALIAN SIDE WOULD ESPECIALLY REQUEST A DETAILED CHECKING BY THE TECHNICIANS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST LABORATORIES OF THE CONCEPTUAL PROJECT PRESENTLY BEING PREPARED.

THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WILL EVENTUALLY SUPPLY FURTHER AND MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE SUBJECT IF THE COMPETENT U.S. AUTHORITIES WOULD REQUIRE IT AND TAKE THIS OCCASION (COMPLEMENTARY CLOSE). UNQTE
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3. THE ITALIANS HAVE RAISED THE ISSUE OF EXPANDING TECHNICAL COLLABORATION ON WASTE CONDITIONING SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST, MOST RECENTLY DURING DEPT. SECRETARY O'LEARY'S VISIT (SEE PARA 5, REF A). THEY REGARDED THE MARCH EXPERT VISIT AS A SUCCESS, DESPITE U.S. RELUCTANCE TO DISCUSS VITRIFICATION TECHNOLOGY (REF B), AND CLEARLY VIEW THEIR CURRENT PROPOSAL AS A FOLLOW-UP TO THAT VISIT.

4. WHILE WASTE DISPOSAL HAS NOT BEEN AS HIGHLY VISIBLE AS A PUBLIC ISSUE IN ITALY AS ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE AND THE U.S., THE MISSION WOULD REGARD TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN THIS AREA AS LIKELY TO CONTRIBUTE TO GOI CAPABILITIES TO RESPOND TO FUTURE ANTI-NUCLEAR USE OF THE WASTE DISPOSAL TECHNOLOGY WILL CLEARLY BE NECESSARY IS DUE COURSE. WE WOULD THEREFORE RECOMMEND A FORTHCOMING ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE USG, WITHIN THE LIMITS IMPOSED BY OUR NONPROLIFERATION POLICY.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: A REPLY TO THE ITALIAN REQUEST, PREFERABLY IN TIME FOR DEPT. SEC. BORRER'S MEETING WITH KEY ITALIAN ENERGY FIGURES ON JULY 27. GARDNER

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